

REMARKS

Claims 1-20 are currently pending. The Examiner has responded to the RCE and Amendment by withdrawing the rejections under 35 USC §103 based on the West patent and by newly rejecting Claims 1-20 under 35 USC §102(e) as being anticipated by the same West patent. For the reasons set forth below, Applicants respectfully submit that Claims 1-20, as amended herein, are patentable over the cited prior art.

The present invention teaches and claims a system and method for multicasting a user retrieval request/query to a plurality of retrieval agents for information gathering. Based on user-entered preferential destination information, more than one agent is determined as a destination for the multicast request. The user does not specify a single destination, but issues a request with preferential destination information and the system/method performs the determination of to which agents the retrieval request should be sent and performs the multicasting of the retrieval request to the determined destinations for those agents to respond to the retrieval request.

Under the present invention, the user does not specify the destination (i.e., the identity or the address of the recipient of the retrieval request) or a plurality of pre-registered destinations (e.g., the West rings of trust). Rather, the user simply inputs the message and preferential destination

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information. The present system then uses the preferential destination information to determine agents which should receive the retrieval request for responding to same.

In contrast, the West patent is directed to a method and system for choosing a communication access method and access number for a remote computer to access a single identified destination, either a single specific local computer or a single specific local area network (Col. 24, line 53) in a first embodiment, or to deliver a message to a message module representing a predetermined group of registered users (Col. 25, lines 14-16) in a second embodiment. West discloses software for determining an access path and the cost of accessing along the path in order to connect one computer to an identified destination(s) in the least expensive manner.

The West patent is not directed to multicasting a retrieval request to agents for responding to the retrieval request. Rather, West seeks only to connect one user computer 100 to one user-specified destination 110 in the first embodiment and to deliver one message from a user computer 100 to a delivery module representing a plurality of preregistered users in the second embodiment. In both embodiments, the user in the West system does not enter preferential destination information for multicasting a retrieval request to a plurality of destinations/agents which are unknown to the user. Rather, the West user simply identifies the exact destination(s) or the exact

ring of trusted preregistered recipients and the West software determines the best and cheapest way to connect the user computer to that exact single destination in the first embodiment and the best and cheapest way to deliver the message to a message delivery module accessible by registered users in the second embodiment.

It is clear that, in the first West embodiment wherein one user computer 100 is being connected to one destination computer 110, exact identification and/or address information is provided by the user. Applicants refer the Examiner's attention to the teachings found in Column 6, lines 8-11 wherein it is expressly taught that the user enters "calling to" information to identify the destination computer to which the user wishes to be connected. There are no passages in West which either teach or suggest that a user be connected to a destination which is not expressly identified by the user. The West system evaluates different paths and access providers for establishing the connection between the user at 100 and the destination at 110, but the destination is definitive as specified by the user and cannot be changed or "selected" by the system. Applicants note that all of the citations to which the Examiner refers in citing the West use of defining access points (see: e.g., rejection of Claims 4-7 on page 3) and representative agents refer to the evaluating and selecting of access paths/providers and NOT to evaluating and selecting destinations.

With regard to the West embodiment wherein messages are provided from a message user 1805 to multiple message recipients, Applicants note that the message recipients are preregistered with the system (see: Col. 25, lines 14-16). Therefore, the recipients (or destinations) are known to the user and the system. While a user does not have to specify the address of each recipient, the recipients are known destinations which are registered with the system and are not destinations which are dynamically determined by the system based on preferential destination information supplied by the user with a retrieval request.

What is explicitly set forth in all of the pending claims, as amended, is a system, device and method for performing steps of multicasting a user retrieval request to more than one destination agent, by receiving the request message, determining which multiple agents are to receive the request message, said determining being based on preferential destination information or a messaging policy, and sending the request message to the determined destination agents for responding to the retrieval request. Applicants respectfully assert that the West patent does not anticipate that claim language.

It is well established under U.S. Patent Law that, for a reference to anticipate claims under 35 USC § 102, the reference must teach each and every claim feature. Since the West patent does not teach the receiving of a retrieval request with

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preferential destination information for delivery to more than one determined destination agent, does not teach the use of preferential destination information for determining more than one agent as a destination agent, and does not teach the sending of the retrieval request to more than one agent determined as destinations for responding to the retrieval request, it cannot be maintained that West anticipates the invention as set forth in independent Claims 1, 10, 15, 19 and 20. Furthermore, Applicants assert that a reference which does not anticipate the independent claims cannot be said to anticipate those claims which depend from the independent claims and which add limitations thereto. Therefore, the language of Claims 2-9, 11-14, and 16-18 is not anticipated by the West patent. Accordingly, Applicants respectfully request withdrawal of the anticipation rejections.

Based on the foregoing amendments and remarks, Applicants request entry of the amendments, withdrawal of the rejections, and issuance of the claims.

Respectfully submitted,
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MARKED-UP CLAIMS WITH AMENDMENTS SHOWN

1. A method for multicasting a retrieval request message to more than one of a plurality of agents, comprising the steps of:

receiving a packet comprising a retrieval request message and preferential destination information designated by a user;

determining to which of said plurality of agents said message is to be sent, by referring to said preferential destination information; and

sending said message to more than one of said plurality of agents determined as destinations for responding to said retrieval request.

10. A computer comprising:

an execution environment for a plurality of agents; and

a message monitor for receiving a packet, comprising a retrieval request message and preferential destination information designated by a user, from an agent being active in the execution environment for said agents, and for determining to which of said plurality of agents said message is to be sent by referring to said preferential destination information, and for multicasting said messages to more than one of said plurality of agents determined as destination agents for responding to said retrieval request.

15. A storage medium for storing a program executable by a machine for causing the machine to perform method steps for multicasting a retrieval request message to more than one of a plurality of agents, said method comprising the steps of:

receiving a packet comprising a retrieval request message and preferential destination information designated by a user;

determining to which of said plurality of agents said message is to be sent, by referring to said preferential destination information; and

sending said message to more than one of said plurality of agents determined as destinations for responding to said retrieval request.

19. A method for multicasting a retrieval request message to more than one of a plurality of agents, comprising the steps of:

receiving a retrieval request message;

determining to which of said plurality of agents said message is to be sent, by referring to a messaging policy data defining priorities of agents to which said message can be sent; and

sending said message to more than one of said plurality of agents determined as destinations for responding to said retrieval request.

20. A storage medium for storing a program for causing a machine to execute the steps of a method for multicasting a retrieval request message to more than one of a plurality of agents, said method comprising the steps of:

receiving a retrieval request message;

determining to which of said plurality of agents said message is to be sent, by referring to a messaging policy data defining priorities of agents to which said message can be sent; and

sending said retrieval request message to more than one of said plurality of agents determined as destinations for responding to said retrieval request.